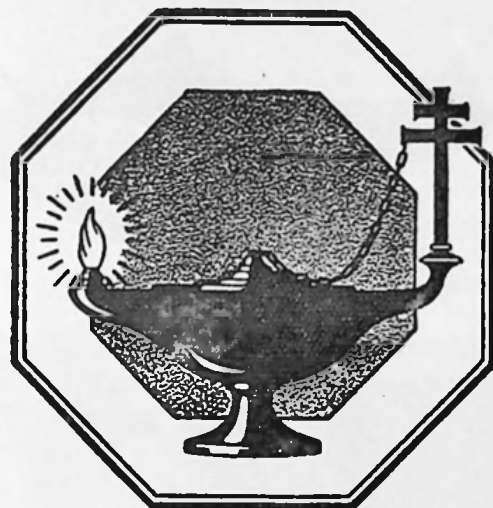


TOC H JOURNAL



DECEMBER—MCMXLVI

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PUBLISHED BY TOC H FROM ITS HEADQUARTERS, AT
FORTY-SEVEN, FRANCIS STREET, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1

THREEPENCE

THE LAMP OF MAINTENANCE *of* TOC H



THE WORLD CHAIN OF LIGHT, DECEMBER 11-12.

TOC H JOURNAL

VOL. XXIV.

DECEMBER, 1946

No. 12

LIGHT! LIGHT!

THE WORLD CHAIN OF LIGHT, which has been annually "forged" since Toc H Australia started it from Perth, W.A., in 1929, once more binds the world-wide family together on December 11, the Birthday anniversary of Talbot House, Poperinghe, in 1915. This year it starts with the lighting of a Lamp of Maintenance in Berlin. All lights of units westward from there to the Pacific will be kindled that evening at 9 p.m. by their local time, and the Chain will be completed on December 12, when all units from the Pacific back to Berlin have done the same. Thus the unity of our whole movement is called to mind. In this article Padre PERCY AUSTIN, of Coalville Branch, touches on the meaning behind the symbol of Light.

WHATEVER other impressions a visitor to a Toc H meeting may receive he will certainly be struck by its note of fellowship. He will find himself in a company of men of varying ages and types, and representing many different points of view on all sorts of subjects, yet obviously united in a common purpose, and sharing a very real social fellowship, to which he as a visitor is at once made welcome. Then at a certain point in the meeting the fellowship, or at least the expression of it in quip and crank, laughter and leg-pulling, argument and discussion, is interrupted for a few moments while the members take part in a simple little ceremony. Interrupted, we say. But is that how our visitor will interpret it? God forbid! He may not realise its full significance, but even if no explanation is offered him, he will be dull-witted indeed if he fails to sense that it is in that simple ceremony that the fellowship finds both its symbolism and its deepest expression. The meeting will have missed the mark if the visitor does not go away with the conviction that our Toc H fellowship is fellowship with a difference. It possesses an indefinable something which differentiates it from the *cameraderie* of pub or club, or of most of the other associations in which men find and express good companionship. And the word which

more than any other expresses that something different is *Light*.

In that popular 'best seller' of a few years ago, A. S. M. Hutchinson's *If Winter Comes*, there is the following passage:—

"Man cannot live by bread alone, the Churches tell him; but he says, 'I am living on bread alone, and doing well on it.' But I tell you, Hapgood, that plump down in the crypt and abyss of every man's soul is a hunger, a craving for other food than this earthly stuff. And the Churches know it, but instead of reaching down to him what he wants—light, light—instead of that they invite him to dancing and picture shows, and you're a jolly good fellow, and religion's a jolly fine thing, and no spoil sport, and all that sort of latter-day tendency. Why, man, he can get all that outside the Churches, and get it better. Light! light! he wants *light*, Hapgood. And the Padres come down and drink beer with him, and watch boxing matches with him, and sing music-hall songs with him, and dance Jazz with him, and call it making religion a living thing in the lives of the people. Lift the hearts of the people to God, they say, by showing them that religion is not incompatible with having a jolly fine time. And there's no God there that a man can understand for him to be lifted up to. Hapgood, a man wouldn't care what he had to give up if he knew he was making for something inestimably precious. But he doesn't know. *Light! Light!*, that's what he wants, and the longer its withheld the lower he'll sink."

Leaving aside the question whether that judgment is quite fair to the padres (though one cannot deny at least the partial truth of the indictment) it has a message and

challenge for us. The peculiar peril of all ritual and ceremonial is that it can so easily become a formality. It is not only the 'heathen' who are guilty of 'vain repetition.' Familiarity does not always breed contempt, but it does so easily dull us to the deeper meaning and significance of even the most sacred things with which our familiar practices are concerned. We are not free from the peril in our Ceremony of Light. Indeed we need to be on our constant guard against it. Hence we do well to face the challenge with which the foregoing citation presents us. Are we in Toc H content with the regular and punctilious performance of the ceremony of Light, or do we let it speak to us? If we do, we shall surely find that part of its message is a constant reminder that our task is to help men find the Light which "plumb down in their souls" they long for. We are to do it by letting our light shine before them, as in our ceremony we pledge ourselves to do.

What does it mean?

But what exactly does it mean, either to have the light for ourselves or to reveal it to others, and help to lead them into its satisfying possession? No man in his senses would attempt a complete answer to that question. The great words of our Master of which Light is one of the most significant, are part of His "unsearchable riches." They are gems of many facets, and they have an infinite richness and variety of meaning. Hence one cannot hope to do more than suggest a few thoughts dealing with a few aspects of the many-sided truth.

This at least is clear, that Light is a basic element of our Christian faith and experience. That faith is faith in Him who said, "I am the Light of the world: He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And that promise is fulfilled in the experience of everyone who so follows. Faith is sometimes set in antithesis to sight. The Apostle's words are often quoted, "we walk by faith, not by sight." But although that, or at least a particular interpretation of the words, truly

describes certain occasional aspects of Christian experience it is only a very partial truth when applied to the whole of that experience. Faith is not an alternative to sight: it is an addition to it. Through faith we see more clearly. Faith enlightens. Faith gives *insight*. Faith illumines the eyes of the understanding. Faith means, as A. C. Benson puts it, "sending our heart a little farther than our eyes," and though the venture may often seem to be a leap in the dark it turns out to be a leap into the light. For the man of faith life still has its baffling problems, and there are often clouds in his sky, but *he does not walk in darkness*. He does not shirk the realist's challenge to "face facts," but he knows that the things which are seen by such facing of "facts" are only part of the picture. The trouble with the realist is that he is aware of what is in the foreground but is blind to the background. Or like Elisha's servant in Dothan he looks *around*, and sees nothing but the encompassing host. It is only the man of faith who learns to look *up*, and who is rewarded by the vision of the unseen spiritual resources, the "horses and chariots of fire round about."

Such a faith gives a man a background which illumines all that is in the foreground. It does not provide him with clear and complete solutions of all the problems. Far from it, for in many cases the problems are intensified by a deeper understanding of them. But he does see them in a new light. Literally so, for that familiar phrase is an exact description of the situation. He is saved from all peril of lapsing into the cynicism of pessimism or the hopelessness of despair, for in that light he is confident that no problems are ultimately insoluble, no obstacles ultimately insurmountable, and no evils ultimately invincible. He has that confidence because he is assured that the light in which he sees light has its source in Him who is Light. The pathway of life for him may often lie "amid the encircling gloom," but he is sure of the "Kindly Light" to which he can ever look for leading.

In no man's soul was that hunger for Light

even more intense than it was in George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends. After long and agonising search for "that far land of light" he made the glad discovery of the light within: "The Lord opened to me by his invisible power that every man is enlightened by the divine light of Christ." For him it was a profound mystical experience of a kind that not all of us can hope to share, but the essential truth of the experience may and should be ours. The light within! In His light we see light!

'A Kind of Glory'

Through that experience we see things differently. The more real it becomes to us—and it should be an ever enlarging experience—the more do we come to understand what the poet meant when he wrote,

I look at all things as they are,
But through a kind of glory.

And that is especially true of the way we look at our fellows. It is easy to talk in general terms of the brotherhood of man, but it is not so easy to make that great phrase a living reality by recognising that every other man is our brother. If we only look at men "as they are" we see so little to attract us in the vast majority. There is the insignificant minority who appeal to us and with whom we are willing to cultivate friendly relations. But men as men mean very little to us, and we feel little if any personal obligation toward them. We need the illumination of the understanding if we are to look at them

"through a kind of glory," and see them as they *really* are. "We must take men as we find them," says the realist, but once again he comes far short of the true reality, for by his method "every man a brother" can never be anything more than a cant phrase.

In this as in all else our Master is our great exemplar. How wonderfully and consistently He looked at men through a kind of glory! How ironic it must have seemed when He gave Simon a new name, meaning 'Rock'! Simon, with his impulsive instability, seemed utterly unrocklike. But Jesus was right, as subsequent history proved. The people murmured when He went to be the guest of Zacchaeus. They knew the man as he was—a sinner. But Jesus looked at him through a kind of glory, and saw in the sinner a man! And again He was right. And it is our high privilege to follow in His steps. It is only by so doing that we can make our Toc H fellowship all that it is meant to be—not a little garden walled around in which we have good times together with a few kindred souls, but a beacon tower from which the light shines forth, and whence each member looks out and sees his brother man, as the Master did, through a kind of glory. Only so shall we be able to offer that deep true friendship for which this troubled world has such sore need, and to find the constant inspiration that will make us "leap with joy to any task for others."

Light! Light! In lumine Tuo videbimus Lumen!

PERCY AUSTIN.

CARPENTER'S SONG

Verses by Mrs. SLATER, wife of Padre R. L. Slater, once of Mark XVIII, now in Burma.

Lord, square pegs,
Even more than the round,
In this Thy workshop
Most surely abound!

Since in the finish,
Pegs' shape is nought,
But only the choosing
Wherewith all is wrought,

Save that these stubborn
Cross-grained pegs of Thine
May of themselves rebuff
The Will Divine,

May I wholly,
In this my day,
Square peg or round peg,
Go Thy Way!

THE FAMILY PURSE

Some Further Facts arising from Tubby's article on "Facing Facts" in the October Journal

We hope to be able to use this page from time to time to keep the membership fully informed of the financial position and of various activities and ideas which may prove useful in the drive to meet our responsibilities.

The Year's Accounts

We cannot give full information yet concerning the figures for the year just ended, as a mass of detail work is still to be completed, but those figures, subject to audit, will be published in the January JOURNAL if Barkis allows. The information we have available is encouraging. The following table compares income for the years 1944/45 and 1945/46, and shows at once how the membership in this first year after the war has responded to the need:—

	INCOME		
	Year ended	Per-	centage
	31st October	centage Increase	
	1945	1946	
	£	£	
Membership Subscriptions	2,933	3,082	5%
Unit Contributions	4,030	7,493	86%
Builders' Contributions	6,086	7,829	29%
Donations	1,242	4,529	265%

This is a good start and promises well for the future.

In spite of this effort the accounts when produced will still show a large deficit, but this will be substantially reduced by the Thanksgiving Fund total of £6,916, all of which has been built up by the effort of the members; more details next month.

A Toc H Chest

Many Units have asked to be allowed to use the old War Chests for collecting the odd coppers for General Funds. New labels are therefore being prepared and will be issued to Areas as soon as possible. Will all holders of War Chests please return them, together with any donations received, to their Area Treasurer or Secretary right away, and let him know how many new boxes they will

require. This scheme raised £10,420 during the war for Services work.

All Hallows

Many members have been asking what they should do about donations towards the rebuilding of the Toc H Chapel in All Hallows Church. The appeal for £25,000 for this purpose has been incorporated with the appeal for other Toc H needs. There is one appeal; the income will be allocated according to need. All donations and contributions should therefore be sent to the Area office or Toc H Headquarters. It is not necessary to earmark such gifts.

Operation Sinews

Early in the New Year we are planning Conferences for all Branch and Group Treasurers (or deputies) and one other Unit Officer if desired, all District Bursars and one other District Officer if desired, all Area Treasurers and any other members of Area Executives who wish to attend, and all Central Councillors. These Conferences will deal with financial principles, policy and facts, and we are hoping for and expecting a lively question time. Some of the facts will be printed and distributed for reference at the Conferences if time permits.

The centres and dates now planned are:

Manchester	January 11th
London	January 18th
York	February 1st
Cardiff	February 15th
Birmingham	February 22nd
Peterborough	March 8th

Other Conferences may be held in other parts of the country if there is a strong desire for them. Any member detailed above may attend any one of these Conferences as may be most convenient for him; they are not limited to Area boundaries. On the other hand, as accommodation is limited the

invitation to the Conferences cannot be made an open one. The Central Executive and Central Finance Committees will be represented as far as is humanly possible, and each Conference will be attended by the Administrative Padre, Herbert Leggate, and the

Chief Accountant. It is our wish that the membership should know the whole facts; it will be the responsibility and privilege of those attending the conferences to take the facts back to their Units. Invitations will be issued at an early date. J.H.

MORE AND BETTER UNITS OF TOC H

Two new publications point the way to a practical response to Tubby's recent challenge. In "Facing Facts—The Issue as Tubby sees it" (reproduced in the JOURNAL for October, 1946) he wrote: "We must be prepared . . . to launch out and to establish boldly everywhere . . . hundreds of new units, until we are, within two years from now, 100,000 members strong."

A sixpenny booklet, written by a fully qualified member in the West Midlands Area, contains his ideas of how to start a new unit of Toc H: other members and Areas may not, of course, always agree with him in detail. Full of practical hints based on experience, he sets out plans and methods of "hiving-off" or of sponsoring a separate growth. Appended to it there is a glossary of the terms to be understood by new leaders. Those intent on extension will find much to concern them in "*Towards Toc H—First Steps in Forming a New Unit.*"

"The Time Has Come . . ."

Similar in purpose, but very different in treatment, is a series of papers written by Padre Herbert Leggate. Readers of the JOURNAL will remember his essays published in 1945—"Lights on Toc H." The same incisive style now points to the principles and purpose of those selected to work in Extension Teams. Their motives and methods are closely examined. The approach to their job is discussed for the benefit of the officers of a new unit: Secretary, Jobmaster, Treasurer, Padre, even the Pilot, should there be available the right man. With a sure touch, the Administrative Padre gives a provocative lead to clear thinking on the fundamentals of family life in Toc H. This new booklet, also priced at sixpence, has been published under the title of "*The Time Has Come.*" Indeed it has—for more and better units.

THE 'MOVIES' KEEP MOVING

IN the JOURNAL last April there was a short account, with a photograph, of the entertainment of hospital patients with a portable cinema, undertaken by Toc H Belfast. This job has now grown beyond all expectation, for the Branch is now giving regular shows every month not only to over a dozen hospitals and sanatoria but to the Deaf and Dumb Mission, the Deaf and Blind School, H.M. Prisons in Belfast and Armagh, the Nazareth Homes for Boys and Girls, and Borstal. They have also started gramophone concerts to supplement the cinema, some-

times two shows of each on the same evening. A 16 page booklet now gives an idea of the scope of the job. A remarkable example of this Belfast job is given by the *Daily Mirror* of September 10:—

"As the children trooped into the Ulster Schools for the Deaf and Blind, where the film was shown, each deaf-and-dumb child led a blind playmate. As the film flashed on the screen, each child held his neighbour's hand, and with a 'touch shorthand' they told each other what they saw or heard."

Mark IX, Bristol, has been doing similar work, and raised funds for it by a garden party in September.

ANGLO - GERMAN

TOC H in the B.A.O.R. now begins to direct its effort chiefly towards co-operation with our troops in Anglo-German service to German youth in its sorry plight. The Editor has gone to Germany and will have some things about this to say to readers on his return.

Meanwhile there is a counterpart of the Anglo-German picture, on a very much smaller scale, in this country. Public opinion has been steadily taking account of the 370,000 German prisoners of war still held here. A very uncomfortable feeling is growing among British people that, even if their detention may be technically legitimate, it can no longer be morally justified: speakers and newspapers begin roundly to refer to them as "slave labour." We will not attempt to argue the case on this page.

Here and there something can be done, and is being done, to help these men behind the wire not to lose hope and turn sour. Parish clergy near their camps have begun to do what they can. And in a few cases, at least, Toc H is taking a hand, with the consent (always essential) of the camp commandant. In two camps in the North, for instance, one of our District Chairmen is lecturing to selected Germans on local government: with the principles of democracy he is also, in effect, teaching the Toc H spirit.

Here are two other examples—probably there are, and will be, many more. Rainham (Kent) Branch were invited, through the Church authorities, to get in touch with a camp at Newington. On their first visit one member gave a talk on Toc H, which was interpreted. They had tea together and finished the evening with the Lord's Prayer in English and in German. Other meetings followed. A piano was imported by Toc H, and Vic Martin, fresh from our Services Club

at Fallingbostal, told the prisoners, to their delight, of his job with German children there, reported already in the JOURNAL. Their hosts' gratitude took the form of a bunch of flowers, then of a model steam-trawler they had made for the Branch.

Another example comes from Stratford-on-Avon, where for some time the Branch has been meeting every Friday evening with a little group of German prisoners in their camp. Here is a glimpse of the scene. Drive into the camp and open the door of a lighted hut. There, waiting eagerly, are the faithful fourteen, who come forward smiling to shake hands all round. English and Germans, friends already, sit together on benches round the walls. A visitor talks for twenty minutes in German, and then, spreading a large map of Germany on the floor, invites them to come forward one by one and lay a finger on their home town. Father and mother, wife and children, the farm or the university—how freely and longingly they talk of these! Then 'Light' is taken—the first part spoken in English over the Branch Lamp, then repeated by heart in German by a prisoner over a most beautiful Lamp, made of scrap wood by themselves; the Silence is very full of poignant meaning for all; the words of Re-dedication, in English, then in German, follow. Tea now arrives in a petrol can and is served in pint mugs, two plates of thick cheese sandwiches go with it. And sitting round the trestle-table they laugh loud together over tricks with cards and knives and string. The Germans sing a chorus or two before goodnight. There is in it all a fellowship so clear and unconstrained that any member opening the door would see the picture of a normal Branch meeting, going very well. When the fourteen go home (ah! when?), is this the end—or the beginning?

Lord Halifax sent the following message to the Yorkshire Areas' Festival on November 2nd, 1946:

"All good wishes to the Leeds Festival.

The world, which means ordinary men and women everywhere, is hungry for the spirit in which Toc H was born and in which it must live."

DISTRICT PILOT

A talk given by REG. KNIGHT, Cambridge District Pilot.

It is almost presumption for a District Pilot to address any Unit of Toc H which has a good Pilot of its own. The good Unit Pilot knows his team and is, therefore, better qualified to talk. But the District Pilot can guide the thoughts of the Units under his care in a common channel and, by this concentration on "first things," gain for the corporate District life a greater power and higher quality.

He has no new, no startling function. Concerned less closely perhaps with the training of Probationers than his opposite number in Group or Branch, the District Pilot shares with the Unit Pilots the responsibility of seeing that Toc H remains true to its ideals.

At one time, it was the custom of some Units to have the contents of the Membership Form read or recited before each Initiation. To do so may be old-fashioned now, but, whilst the "vintage" members suggest all kinds of mystical interpretations of our ideals, have we forgotten the plain statements and promises to which we set our signature when we individually sought membership? Might we not gain by a reminder of these fundamentals? If you say "Yes," maybe your Branch or Group would like to carry out an Initiation of the Unit collectively and begin by such a reading. Let someone speak the question "Halt, who goes there?" as from the Elder Brethren and the Elder Brother and the Unit give its reply. Then, the "Pass, Friend! All's well" might be taken in silence and meditation, when some new inspiration might be born in the mind.

Two secondary themes develop from this subject. The JOURNAL has recently and rightly emphasised once more the need for Units to have within themselves as full a cross-section as possible of local life. Only by the impact of divergent views, the one upon the other, can vitality be maintained in Toc H life. Very true! The fellowship must be strong enough to stand the strain, though. We should learn to disagree without being disagreeable. If, then, we renew our adherence

to Toc H principles, we do not "speak our mind" on all occasions when we mix with our fellow members and say to ourselves "This is Toc H. The other chap has got to think fairly."

The second theme is very similar. We should not be selfish talkers and constantly "lay down the law" in private conversation and open discussion. It is no excuse to say "This is Toc H. The others must 'listen hospitably and humbly' to *my* story." There is a time for "saying one's piece" and a time for "holding one's peace."

A Great Responsibility

A responsibility, greater than any yet mentioned, must also be borne upon the shoulders of all Pilots. It is to keep Toc H true to Christ. We are pledged to service and that implies a constant process of giving. Not one of us has the resources to do that without receiving from outside ourselves strength sufficient to discharge our promise. There is no shame in this. Physically when we are hungry, we renew our strength by eating and, in the spirit, the same law holds good. In Toc H, sometimes the word "duty" is heard or the phrase "not letting Toc H down." But that type of talk is a symptom that we are attempting our jobs in our own strength and that is the sure road to failure and one upon which we shall soon cease to "leap with joy to any task for others." We simply must seek God's help through Christ regularly in our Branch or Group life by worship and 'Retreat.'

An old ship's master was on his last voyage home after having been at sea, man and boy, for fifty years. He had told all his friends that he was so sick of the sea that he was determined to retire somewhere inland and among neighbours who had never heard of it. One friend asked him how he was going to manage that. The reply was "When I leave this ship, I'm going to turn my back on the sea and, with a boat's oar on my shoulder, walk and walk until someone says to me

'What's that thing you're carrying?' and there I'll make my home." As true Christians, we should be carrying our Master's cross deep into places where the underlying eternal realities we speak of in the *Main Resolution* are unknown, until the folk we meet notice the quality of our dedicated lives and ask questions.

Although our Movement is comparatively small, there is no need for our movement to be small. Nearly 2,000 years ago, a little group of men turned the world upside down and, with our world reeling after global war, how we need that Christian penetration of which we have just been thinking! Consider for a moment the outlook from the Far East to our own shores. Japan, cowed by the most destructive force of all ages, has exemplified pagan brutality such as we never expected to see in human nature. China has escaped from lingering war against the invader into a renewal of civil strife. The U.S.S.R. assumes the force of a religion and men of all nationalities, who suffer from social or economic frustration, look wistfully to Russia, but successful material humanism is deceptive. Germany gave to the world the conception of Belsen, described by the B.B.C. on the anniversary of the relief of the Camp as "a new weapon in the armoury of State domination and not confined to its originators." We pass through France, sensitive and a little cynical after five years of occupation by the Nazis, to our own land where we must honestly admit that a good deal of complacency and laziness still exists parallel to the awakened sense of home and world responsibility. Possibly one good feature can be credited to British Commonwealth character; something that has made us the target for all countries indulging in political aggression since the war ended; some innate decency and a blind desire to be honest and helpful. This moral sense, though, is the legacy of our forefathers' Christianity and we are prodigal sons. If we do not find Christ for our age, evil things will fill the vacuum left by our prodigality.

Truth to tell, we have forgotten God as many a child has forgotten a father, who

seemed so far away when in the Forces. But do we really need God? We can put all wrongs right by planning. And we are so technically clever too. We can release the power locked up in the atom and are, in consequence, as gods ourselves. Look at that drab Church! Pitiful! Useless! Yet in such a Church and indeed within the company of every group of folk gathered together in Christ's name, is the only power which will teach us to use these awful discoveries aright. Even U.N.O. is as yet based upon fear. "The next war" and "the atom bomb" are twin bogeys which make every country, big and small, look askance over its shoulder. Can Toc H help to turn fear into fellowship?

A Five-pronged Fork

A few months ago, the JOURNAL contained two or three articles on the formation of a Toc H Unit and the duties of the various officers. In one of these articles, the Pilot was described as a man of one subject—*The Four Points of the Compass*. Just to be different, shall we suggest that he might bring to the notice of his group, Branch or District Team five points—the points of a five-pronged garden fork with which to practise a little Christian horticulture?

Imagine the first prong as the Anglican Church, the second as the Nonconformist Churches, the third as Toc H, the fourth as the Roman Catholic Church and the fifth, if you will, as Judaism from which we derive our Old Testament faith.

The central position of Toc H suggests that our Movement is not a negative activity, that Toc H is inter-denominational not non-denominational. If Toc H was missing from our fork, a piece of ground would remain unturned and you know what happens when you dig with a broken fork. You have to return to the undisturbed earth and assail it with the outside prongs. Toc H has a wonderful way with those who seem to shy at the very mention of the Church and should be a most effective bridge. But a bridge must be firmly planted at both ends and here there is a plain challenge to Toc H members to throw themselves fully into the activities of their

Churches to make one end of the span secure.

A good fork must also be sharp and sharpness implies concentration to a point. The point at the end of each prong of our fork needs no mention and we can detect for ourselves the common purpose of the five. Your prongs, too, are connected along the top.

Good gardeners say that tools must be kept clean for their constant use to be of the best effect and we can see the importance of that since earth is bound to stick when the instrument is plunged deeply into it. Left on the

fork, earth can be corrosive. One remembers also that a fork, even if as bright as silver, is for use and does not replace the copper warming pan on the wall as an object of beauty and ornament.

One more thought only remains to be expressed. You may say "Why not have all five prongs united?" To do so would transform our fork into a spade and a spade is certainly a good tool for digging in light and sandy soil, but for the hard resistant clay, the fork's the thing.

R.K.

"WE ARE THE BUILDERS"



"We are the Builders," ran the 'theme song' in *The Thorn of Avalon*, the Toc H Festival Masque at the Crystal Palace in 1931. That it is possible to take this literally is shown in the photograph of Toc H members clearing and preparing a site at Compton Dundon (Somerset), where a Unit has now been formed. To provide a meeting place of any sort the members and friends of the Unit have bought a Nissen hut, which

has since been erected on a piece of land lent, free of all cost, by another well-wisher. When the task is finally completed the Toc H Unit will not only have a meeting place but will have provided the village with a very useful centre. The foreman (Reg Smith, Secretary Western Area) in the photograph appears to be very true to type in his inactivity, but he was resting after the strenuous job of laying the foundation stone!

CLOWN

"If you must create a new office in Toc H, I would propose that of Branch Clown."

(JACK SHAW at the Staff Conference, 4.9.1946).

PERFECT CLOWN is a rare creature, but when he is found he is much treasured and beloved. One moment he has you in fits of laughter. The next, breathless with apprehension. The next, with a touch of pathos, he has conjured that tightness in your throat and damp pricking between your eyes and nose which is forerunner to the degradation of the sniff or handkerchief. But swift as lightning he saves you from this, and rocks you with laughter once again.

Let us be quite certain what we mean by clowning. It includes, of course, but is by no means limited to, the clown of convention, with his white face, comical hat, and ridiculous frilly garments. Clothes, however, do not make the clown. You can see many so dressed in pantomime or circus ring, who are nothing more than buffoons or knock-about comedians in disguise. Clown is neither of these. The buffoon makes you laugh through the simple use of the resounding slap-stick; the comedian by wielding the lighter weapons of wit, sally and repartee. The instrument of the clown is of a different order, namely a mirror.

It is no ordinary mirror that he uses, but a flexible thing, like those modern campaigning contraptions made of thin polished steel. His art lies in bending the thing to create just that measure of distortion for fullest possible effect. The mirror is his own personality, and the images he reflects are the little twists and turns of character, the fits and foibles, joys and disappointments, strengths and weaknesses which make up human nature. You laugh like mad at Clown, then suddenly realise that the butt of your amusement is a trait (grossly exaggerated of course!) of which you yourself are a victim.

The Realist

Clown is a realist. He knows that life is never wholly good nor wholly bad, wholly happy nor wholly sad. His mission is to

'debunk' all false dramatisations and pompous self-conceits. For him the heroic heroes and villainous villains of romantic sentiment are false and foolish fictions, to be laughed at until seen for what they really are. He paints life never in blacks and whites, but in an infinite variety of colour, saying, "Take it! Take it as it comes, with all its incongruities and absurdities. Take it, but never too seriously, with several pinches of salt; relish its changing savour, the bitter along with the sweet; and, above all, live it!"

The romantic sentimentalists don't like Clown, because he pokes fun at them and spoils their conceits. In revenge they have tried to sentimentalise Clown himself, painting him as simulating roistering jollity on the stage, whilst facing stark tragedy in his real private life. Nothing could be more false. What Clown portrays is no mere abstract fancy but a genuine philosophy which, if he is true to himself, he carries to the very heart of his own life. No man or woman has ever made a really successful clown who has not mastered the art of living in all its delicate lights and shades. For them, life itself is a jolly affair, despite its ups and downs, its pains and troubles. Were you to ask any one of the real Masters of the Art, from the King's Jesters of olden times, through the Grimaldis, Grocs and Charlie Chaplins, to the Jack Hulberts and Cicely Courtneidges of the present day, each would tell you so. This is gall and wormwood to the romantic school of thought, but there it is.

The Master Artist

Every medium of self-expression has its clowns, from the easel to the ballet floor, from the public platform to the skating rink. Two things alone they all must have in common—a penetrating insight through the chinks of human nature, and a technical ability surpassing that of the straight expert. The latter is a point which is often overlooked. No man can clown a failing to

satisfaction till he himself is master of the field in which the failing is to be portrayed. The acrobat, in his glistening tights, makes a perfect crossing in mid-air from trapeze to trapeze. The clown follows, in false nose and ill-fitting evening garb, grabs desperately at the flying bar, misses, makes a wild convulsive movement, contrives to catch on with one toe, and crashes upside-down into the attendant waiting on the platform at the end. Do you think he could do that night after night, to the enraptured merriment of the spectators, without possessing all the skill of the straight act and more? The buffoon simply misses altogether, and plunges headlong into the safety net below. Not so Clown.

Or take again that masterpiece of clownery in terms of the heroic drama of the early American screen—Charlie Chaplin in *The Gold Rush*. In its delicate humour and pathos there was a touch of genius outmatching the brave buccaneering technique of his contemporary, Douglas Fairbanks.

The Priest of Humour

There is yet another way by which we can define Clown's distinctive function. In the case of the buffoon, we laugh *at* him. In the case of the humourist or comedian, we laugh *with* him. But, in the case of Clown, we laugh *through* him. He performs his antics before us, not just in his own name, but as a jocund paradigm of humanity. His impact upon us is catalytic, for he precipitates a reaction between our *ego* and our own true nature, which gives us a more proportionate view of life. In other words the function he performs is truly a priestly function, and we would not be far from the mark if we named him the High Priest of Humour.

Like all priestly functions, the role of Clown is arduous, for it entails a radical subordination of self, a radical humility. Over and again the demand has proved too drastic on the performer, who has gradually abandoned the role for one which is more flattering. Often it is the character-part itself which is modified through the years.

Such has been the fate of Harlequin who began life as the embodiment of human frailty. Step by step those who have acted him have refined him and whittled him away, till now he is little more than a graceful, whimsical sprite.

As he quitted his part, someone had to replace him. Hence the creation of Pantaloon, to be poked at by Harlequin. But Pantaloon in his turn grew weary of the poking. So Joey was invented to take Clown's part, and Pantaloon is already half way up the ladder climbed by Harlequin. If pantomime lasts, Joey, in due time, will doubtless follow.

If this is true of characters, it is truer still of actors. Should you doubt this, compare one of the early Chaplin films with one of his latest, and mark whether there has not been a subtle shift away from the portrayal of the sheer common little man. To adhere for a life-time to clownery, pure and undefiled, requires a stubborn tenacity of character possessed by few.

Clown and Toc H

What, you may well ask, has all this to do with Toc H? To that I give no answer, except to remind you of a few facts about the nature and the function of Toc H.

1. Every Toc H unit should be a pattern in small of a community of ordinary men living and working together in harmony and enjoyment.

2. Toc H, whilst intensely interested and concerned in this whole business of living, will none the less enlighten all its parts with a strain of jollity, exuberance and carefree inconsequence. James Thurber, that great clown of contemporary American letters, in one of the essays of his book *Let Your Mind Alone* dilates upon the horrors of what he calls "the stream-lined mind." All who have entered into the authentic experience of Toc H will agree with him. Life upon this planet can never be wholly planned and organised. The unforeseen and unexpected is for ever cropping up, and there is such a thing as a right, healthy, cheerful Christian opportunism which is ready to take things as

they come. But such a response to life will never be effective apart from a "knowledge of one's stuff" which at least equals, if not exceeds, the knowledge of "the scribes and pharisees." "That jolly Toc H gardener" must know one more about gardening than just "the gardener," if he is to justify his philosophy to the world.

3. Toc H has no truck with cant or shibboleth, with the rhetorical or the falsely sentimental, be it pious or impious. Its members strive always to take a whole and honest view of themselves, which includes peculiarities and weaknesses; and then to meet others, whole men to whole men, upon the same basis. This entails the surrender of one's own cherished illusions about oneself—

the pricking of the bubble of self-conceit. But human nature is inveterately self-conceited. Nearly every one of us has his own pet fancy about himself held by no-one except himself. "Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us," cried the great Ayrshire poet, "To see oorsels as ithers see us!"

Such a radical humility can only come to pass in conjunction with its twin talent, a radical sense of humour. In other words, like Clown, we are called to at least one high calling, the ministry of humour. It is a ministry which lies more deeply embedded in the Gospel story than many are inclined to think. Maybe there is a tip or two we yet may learn from Clown.

RUPERT.

THE ELDER BRETHREN



This Memorial Tablet to Neville Talbot, co-founder of Talbot House, Poperinghe, on December 11, 1915, was unveiled on September 28 in St. Mary's Church, Nottingham, of which he was Vicar at the time of his death on April 3, 1943.

APPLEYARD.—In October, WALTER APPLE-YARD, a member of Knottingley Branch. Elected 22.5.'45.

CULHAM.—In February, ALGERNON ALBERT CULHAM, a member of Sevenoaks Branch, also a Builder. Elected 30.4.'35.

DAVIS.—Killed in action on September 10, 1944, ALFRED CHARLES DAVIS, aged 24, The King's Liverpool Regt. Elected 16.7.'37.

EVERS.—On September 26, HUBERT EVERS, aged 60, a member of Oldham Branch. Elected 9.1.'31.

JACOB.—On November 3, G. F. W. JACOB (father of the Deputy Chairman, Central Executive), a General member and a supporter of Wood Green Branch. Elected 8.5.'29.

SAUNDERS.—On October 12, RALPH G. SAUNDERS, aged 35, a member of Coalville Branch. Elected 11.1.'44.

STEAD.—In September, Dr. C. C. STEAD, aged 76, sometime Chairman of Hawkhurst Branch. Elected 9.6.'31.

VARCO.—On September 16, TOM VARCO, aged 70, a member of Looe Branch and of the Plymouth District Team. Elected 19.12.'25.

WARD.—On October 11, S. C. WARD, aged 62, a member of Upminster Branch. Elected 3.6.'43.

TOC H—A GUILD

SINCE the early days of the connection, through Tubby, of All Hallows-by-the-Tower with our movement we have thought and spoken of it as "a guild church of Toc H." What precisely a 'guild' (or 'gild') was or is, and how it may be concerned with a church, few of us have thought to enquire, even if we show strangers our local Guildhall with pride. This is not the place to research into the history of the guilds. Vaguely most of us know of them as societies in which our mediæval ancestors came together to maintain the standards of their particular handicraft and to protect its privileges; in some senses they were the forerunners of the modern Trade Unions. The story-book halo of romance which hangs loosely round all things mediæval clings to the guild, and indeed the pageantry and the piety of their heyday were no sham. How far does Toc H and its 'guild church' bear any resemblance to the distant life of the guilds?

One or two quotations may tickle the fancy of our readers here and there and set them wondering at the like and the unlike. It is natural enough to open first that great 'best-seller' of this time, Trevelyan's *English Social History*. Among other references you will find this:—

"The gilds, from which priests" (*Toc H padres, look out!*) "were generally excluded, represented the growing intelligence and initiative of the laity. But they were permeated, as was most of life and thought, by religious ideas. The line" (*Toc H, take note!*) "between religion and daily life was not so strictly drawn as in modern times. Men combining in a gild for a benevolent, a useful or even a convivial purpose liked to give a religious tinge to their proceedings and to invoke a saint's blessing on their association. Even if they were anti-clerical, they were not irreligious."

Toc H units with their "benevolent, useful and even convivial purpose," like also "to give a religious tinge to their proceedings": sometimes it is scarcely more than that—and in those cases Toc H has lost its deep secret.

The other day, visiting Norfolk for a delightful guest night, I came upon a little book called *Long Ago in Swaffham*. The

author, Canon Granville Smith, has a page or two about the local guilds, of which there were several. (At the height of the wool trade, which made Norfolk the richest part of England, the guilds in the county, he says, numbered nine hundred and nine—a high 'ceiling' for our East Anglian units to aim at!). Here are some extracts:—

"The Guilds of early days served many purposes—they were a voluntary association for a common purpose. The members paid contributions, they worshipped together, generally in some part of the Parish Church which was specially allotted to them" (*as in the Toc H Chapel, the north aisle of All Hallows*). "They feasted together, and gave help to members in sickness or poverty, contributed to good causes, and altogether were an important feature" (*as Toc H should surely be*) "in the life of the community."

"Many of them had private Chaplains" (*Toc H padres*) "who conducted their services, and sometimes employed their spare time" (*as ours often do*) "in assisting the parochial clergy . . ."

"Each member of a Guild took an oath and paid an admission, as well as a yearly, fee. They held business meetings" (*'family nights'*) "and had an annual Guild day" (*a Birthday festival, Re-dedication*). "Each Society had its livery for great occasions" (*we used to wear Toc H blazers and flannel bags at Festivals!*) "and strict rules for good character and conduct."

"Parochial Guilds" (*Branches or groups*) "met either in some room or in the houses of members" (*a good old Toc H custom*); "if rich enough they built a Guild hall" (*? a Centre—some day*). "Legacies or gifts were presented to them and they lent money to poor members" (*better not start that!*) . . .

"Not infrequently they provided miracle plays" (*'Masques' at Birthday Festivals*), "which, in an age when few could read, were intended to put scripture truths before the eyes of the people. They also arranged Pageants for the amusement of their neighbours . . ."

"They sprang up among the Anglo-Saxons, and, in those days, had to pay one-third of the fine inflicted for homicide on a member" (*no recorded instance in Toc H so far!*). "They were probably put down by the Normans . . . but revived in the latter part of the 13th century with increased splendour and often under Royal Patent" (*Our Royal Charter of 1922*) . . . "They had power to purchase lands, to build chapels, erect altars and maintain chaplains, whose salary was about 6d. a year from every member" (*an idea for our Finance Committee?*); "the total amounted to from 25 to 50 shillings" (*save on Staff!*). "The Clerk or Secretary of the Guild received 3 shillings a year" (*ask our General Secretary!*); "and an officer called the Dean, or Beadle," (*? Branch Treasurer*) "took about 10d. a year."

"They kept lights" (*the Prince's Lamp in All Hallows*) "always burning before the image of their patron Saints . . ."

Some of the points of contact between Toc H and a 13th century guild may be accidental and superficial enough, but there is enough of real resemblance—the fellowship of

good conduct and well-doing, the delight in meeting and ceremony, the lively sense of common purpose and the bond of common worship in a well-loved place set apart—to give us a warm feeling of kinship with these men of our race who took the road before us.
B.B.

DISFIGURED

MANY men and women would be dead to-day, were it not for the wonders of plastic surgery which has kept them alive and made them available as useful citizens. After a war in which science contributed so vastly to horrible death and mutilation, it is good to think of science as a creative force.

In some cases plastic surgery has been able to make a patient look practically normal. Some are in the slow process of reaching that end. Some are disfigured for life. In the last two cases the patient is often continually aware of his disfigurement and extremely sensitive about it. The shocked look on the face of the passer-by, the deliberate avoidance of the patient by some people (they sometimes leave a railway compartment as he enters; in one case fellow-workers refused to co-operate with a patient, in another customers would not accept bread delivery from a disfigured roundsman)—these are things with which a disfigured man has to contend, things which may cause him to suffer sickness of mind harder even to bear than that of body.

Toc H claims to be a cross-section of the community, and that it can have an effect on public opinion. Let it foster among the public, in every way it can, the certain truth that, once the eye is accustomed, the character and individuality of a disfigured man are as charming and exciting as ever. It is said that

beauty is skin-deep, and in these days beauty is freely smalded upon the skin, but character and individuality are worth more than any skin-deep beauty, whether natural or bought over the counter.

Beyond striving to educate public opinion, Toc H can do more. Basingstoke Branch is a small Branch but it is co-operating splendidly with the patients of one Hospital. The Boys' Club, which is run by officers of the Branch and is situated at Branch Headquarters, is used by disfigured patients on evenings when the Club is not in session. Some of the patients have intimated, when on leave, that they would like to link up with a Toc H Unit nearest their homes, and be accepted into the Family life with no more fuss than would an ordinary visitor. A correspondent at the Hospital has agreed to contact Inky Bean (the H.A.C. to the Southern Area) in such cases, giving the name and home address of the patient and when he will be at home. If a District Secretary is advised by Inky that a patient is going into his Area, will he please make a point of arranging that the man be paid a personal visit, to ascertain whether he can be of any assistance to him. The main thing is to give him some social contacts, such as *taking* him to a Branch meeting, which would probably lead to other contacts.

THE JOURNAL IN A NEW DRESS

As announced last month, this JOURNAL, beginning with the January number, 1947, will exchange the format which it has kept since 1922 for a smaller and handier 'pocket' size. Its 48 pages will contain more reading matter than the present issue; its price will be 6d. (5s. per annum).

Acknowledgment: The photograph on page 206 is used by courtesy of The Nottingham Journal.

